

Irish John Willson United Empire Loyalist Family Fonds

1772-1978 (non-inclusive)

RG 169-1

Brock University Archives

Creator:	Maclean Family members
Extent:	1.67m textual records - 2 ½ cartons, 1 large format storage box 78 photographs
Abstract:	This fonds contains materials relating to the family of Irish John Willson. The bulk of the materials contains correspondence, financial records; including deeds, indentures, insurance papers. The collection also contains photographs as well as personal and military ephemera and some items of realia.
Materials:	Typed and handwritten correspondence, photographs, ephemera, realia, receipts, deeds, grants, and certificates.
Repository:	Brock University Archives
Processed by:	Jen Goul
Last updated:	November 2007
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Preferred Citation:	RG 169, Irish John Willson United Empire Loyalist Family Fonds , 1772-1978, n.d., Brock University Archives.
Acquisition Info.:	This fonds was donated by Alexis MacLean Newton on March 9, 2006; on behalf of herself, and the estate of Sheila Jean MacLean.
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History:	John Willson first came to Upper Canada along with his friend Nathaniel Pettit in the late 1700s. They both moved with their families from New Jersey where they had both been imprisoned for not siding with the rebels and maintaining Loyalist allegiances. Pettit arrived with his four daughters, leaving his son behind. Willson came with his wife and nine children. Willson received 1200 acres of land as well as 200 per child. He settled at the corner of Dorchester road and Thorold Stone Road, where he and his family did very well for themselves. Willson as well as

his son Thomas ran ox-teams on the portage. His son John became the proprietor of the Exchange hotel at Niagara, and Charles operated at the Pavilion hotel at Falls View.

Shortly after his arrival in Upper Canada John Willson changed his name to “Irish” John Willson, as there were 5 other “John Willsons” which appeared on the Loyalists lists. Irish John drowned in the Niagara River in 1798, and his family continued to thrive in Niagara after his death. His second son Thomas Willson, married Abigail Pettit, daughter of his Father’s friend Nathaniel. Thomas was awarded 250 acres of land as a Loyalist and 200 for Abigail, as she was the daughter of a loyalist. He became a blacksmith and also operated ox-teams along the portage. He was Assessor for Stamford Township for 1800, 1807, 1820 and 1829. During the years 1808, 1822, 1825, 1826 and 1831 he was a tax collector and overseer of Statute of Labour.

Thomas and Abigail Willson had nine children together. Francis Bond Head Willson of Beaverdams (mentioned throughout the collection) was a great grandson of Thomas and Abigail.

Thomas and his wife are both buried beside the Lundy’s Lane United Church.

*for more information on the remaining Willson family please refer to box #1, folders 1-3.

* Genealogical information from a paper prepared by Pearl Wilson and given before the Lundy’s Lane Historical Society, May 1945, by Hazel Culp Ferris. Box 1 Folder 1.

Scope and Content: The fonds contain materials mainly relating to the Willson and Cowan families from the late 1700s until mid 1940s. The materials included are clippings, correspondence, publications, military ephemera, realia and photographs.

All information in this fonds was kept in the original folder order in which it arrived, no materials were moved or inter-filed with others. This accounts for the repetition of some folder headings within series (for example in the series correspondence there are numerous folders titled correspondence with different dates). All folders were however arranged into the various series in order to intellectually and physically place like materials together, thus allowing for easier access of materials.

The spelling of the last name Willson was recorded as found on the documents. At times it is spelt with the double ‘l’ and others with the single.

The collection is divided into eight series, biographical, correspondence, financial, large format storage, military ephemera, personal ephemera,

photographs and realia. The materials were placed in alphabetical order within a series and chronological order within designated titles.

- Organization:** The records were arranged into eight series:
- Series I. Biographical, 1748-1978 (non-inclusive)
 - Series II. Correspondence, 1800-1943, n.d. (non-inclusive)
 - Series III. Financial, 1812-1949, n.d. (non-inclusive)
 - Series IV. Large Format Storage, 1773-1941, n.d. (non-inclusive)
 - Sub-series A. Land Grants/records, legal documentation
 - Sub-series B. Newsprint
 - Series V. Military Ephemera, 1909, 1917-1918, 1943-1945, n.d.
 - Series VI. Personal Ephemera, 1894-1978, n.d. (non-inclusive)
 - Series VII. Photographs, ca.1850s, 1868, 1911, 1929, n.d.
 - Sub-series A. Framed Photographs
 - Sub-series B. Loose Photographs
 - Sub-series C. Sleeved Photographs
 - Series VIII. Realia, ca. 1900, 1929, n.d.
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Inventory:

- Series I. Biographical, 1748-1978 (non-inclusive)**
 - 1.1 Genealogical History, 1945; prepared by Pearl Wilson for Hazel Culp to present to the Lundy's Lane Historical Society
 - 1.2 Genealogical Record, 1748-1978; for the descendants of Irish John Willson.
 - 1.3 Genealogical Research, 1933-1934, 1942-1943, 1947, 1969, n.d.; Pearl Wilson [2 photographs]

Series II. Correspondence, 1800-1943, n.d. (non-inclusive)

- 1.4 Correspondence, 1800, 1812, 1818, 1839-1840, 1844, 1847, 1850, 1856, 1859, 1866, 1876, 1888, n.d.; includes the last will and testament of Peter Wright.
- 1.5 Correspondence: Bouck, 1828, 1857, 1868-1869, 1871, 1879, 1884-1887, 1895, 1898, 1900-1902, 1904, 1913-1915; includes receipts, postcards, notes, envelopes, stamps, Pan-Am Program.
- 1.6 Correspondence, 1846, 1879, n.d.; includes Department of Railways and Canals, Canada
- 1.7 Correspondence, 1867, 1897, 1900, 1904-1911, 1915, 1921, 1924, 1927, 1934, 1943; includes Thomas Cowan's obituary.
- 1.8 Correspondence, 1904, 1923, 1925, 1930, 1942-1943; to Edith Cowan and Eva Zimmerman.
- 1.9 Correspondence, 1933-1937; includes Frank B. H. Willson, Pearl Wilson, "Jessie", General E.A. Cruikshank, Ernest Green, Pettit
- 1.10 Embroidered Post Cards, 1914-1915 [5 post cards, 3 envelopes]
- 1.11 Greeting Cards (to Edith Cowan), 1891, 1925, 1936, n.d. [46 cards, 1 hankerchief]
- 1.12 Greeting Cards, 1940-1943, n.d.
- 1.13 Postcards, 1906-1913, 1916, 1921, 1925, 1929, 1931, 1938-1939, n.d. [70 postcards]
- 1.14-1.15 Postcard Albums, 1911-1916, 2 albums containing postcards and business cards.
 - i) Large Album, ca. 1900-1916, contains transcribed postcards mainly from James Ware to Dolly Cowan. Also contains a copy of Ware's attestation papers. [68 postcards]
 - ii) Smaller Album, ca. 1900-1916, contains postcards as well as business cards, funeral and birth announcements for the Cowans.

Series III. Financial, 1812-1949, n.d. (non-inclusive)

- 1.16 Commercial Records, 1873, 1893, 1904-1907, 1912-1919, 1926, 1928, 1934-1935; includes receipts: food, hardware, post office etc.

- 1.17 Francis Bond Head Willson (generation IV), 1880, 1883, 1887, 1890, 1892-1893, 1896, 1898; includes correspondence, maps, receipts, photographs, insurance forms, United Empire Loyalist [3 photographs]
- 1.18-1.22 Insurance Receipts and correspondence for William H. Cowan, 1920-1944; includes The Great West Life Assurance Company, Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada, The Prudential Insurance Company of America, The Mutual Life Assurance Company of Canada.
- 1.23 Legal Documents, 1862, 1876, 1879-1880, 1889-1890, 1893-1894, 1898-1890, 1907, 1915, 1920, 1924, 1926-1927, 1932, 1945-1946; includes land deeds, Canadian Farmer's Mutual Insurance Company Report, receipts, insurance papers (fire), account book, summary of inventories in William H. Cowan's estate.
- 1.24 Shareholder Documents, 1925, 1927-1928; includes Brooks Steam Motors and Brooks Securities Limited, Stratford and Toronto, Ontario.
- 1.25 Tax Documents: Bouck of Gainsborough Township, 1877, 1879-1891.
- 1.26 Transactions, 1772, 1774, 1785-1786, 1802, 1804, 1808-1809, 1820, 1826, 1828, 1835-1838, 1841-1844, 1848-1849; includes receipts, promisory notes (I.O.U.s), record of payment.
- 1.27 Transactions, 1819, 1853, n.d.; includes record of purchase, correspondence, receipts, bills, receipts, many fragments of notes.
- 1.28 Transactions, 1840-1891, 1893, 1898-1899, 1901-1902, 1906, 1910 for Bouck of Gainsborough; includes receipts, promisory notes (I.O.U.s), postcards, Anson Bouck ledger.
- 1.29 Transactions, 1841, 1851-1857; includes valuation of property for T. Wilson of Stamford, tax assessment notices, ledger/record books, correspondence.
- 1.30 Transactions, 1862-1869, 1871-1872, 1874-1875, 1877, 1881, 1884-1885, 1888-1896, 1903-1904, 1906-1908 for Thomas Cowan; includes receipts, insurance papers, promisory notes (I.O.U.s), bank statements, post office receipts, The Presbyterian Record vol.s IX – X (1884-1885), Odd Fellows, Canadian Order of Chosen Friends.
- 1.31 Transactions, 1863, 1869-1874, 1880, 1885, 1888, 1893, 1919-1925, 1927, 1937-1939, 1945-1946, for Edith and Thomas Cowan; includes receipts, correspondence, shares certificates for various companies, birth registration certificate for Edith Louise Cowan (1885)

- 2.1 Transactions, 1879, 1892, 1895, 1898, 1901, 1904, 1907, 1910, 1913, 1918, for Mrs, Elizabeth A. Bouck; includes receipts for Insurance companies, Insurance papers.
- 2.2 Transactions, 1888-1893, 1899, n.d.; includes I.O.U.s, daily journal, inventory lists.
- 2.3 Transactions, 1891, 1893, 1898-1899, 1901-1902, 1906, 1910 for Bouck of Gainsborough; includes promisory notes (I.O.U's), Anson Bouck Ledger, receipts.
- 2.4-2.5 Transfers, 1770s-1890s

Series IV. Large Format Storage, 1773-1941, n.d. (non-inclusive)

Sub-series A. Land Grants/deeds/transfers etc.

- 4.1 Account notices for the Willson family with various merchants, 1795-1796, 1819, 1839, 1843, 1848-1849, 1852, 1857-1858, 1862-1864, 1869-1870, 1873-1877, 1880, 1885; includes notices for various items, food, hardware, etc.
- 4.2 Agreement (marriage separation), 1856, between John Mann and Mary Mann
- 4.3 Audit for Gainsborough Township, 1881; includes receipts and expenditures for Dilly C. Holmes, Treasurer, in account with the Township of Gainsborough, school section rates, dog and sheep fund, Auditors: John L. Becker and Jacob C. Ball. From file *Transactions 1890-1900 for Bouck of Gainsborough*.
- 4.4 Bond for 50 acres, 1844, between Thomas Willson and William Robinson.
- 4.5 Deed, 1818, between John Willson and Thomas Willson.
- 4.6 3rd Degree Mason certificate, Philip High, 1932
- 4.7 Description of Division, Township of Thorold, 1859, for Thomas Willson
- 4.8 Distress Warrant, 1863, between Thomas Willson and George Smith
- 4.9 Distress Warrant Inventory and Notice, 1862, between Alexander Morrison and Thomas Willson
- 4.10 Indenture, 1773, between Mary Willson daughter of Andrew Willson, and Hill Carney, Sarah his wife and Mary their daughter.

- 4.11 Indenture, 1798, between John and Abigail Fralick (husband and wife) and Irish John Willson.
- 4.12 Indenture, 1850, between Thomas Wilson and Peter S. Wright
- 4.13 Land Grant, 1797, to John Thompson for 200 acres in the township of Stamford, County of Lincoln [see also RG 167, folder 54].
- 4.14 Land Grant, 1808, to Thomas Willson, John Willson and John Fannin for 800 acres of land in the Township of Thorold.
- 4.15 Land Grant, 1832, to Thomas and John Willson
- 4.16 Land Indenture, 1853, between William Davis and Thomas Willson. Witness Malcom Swayze.
- 4.17 Lease Agreement, 1848, between Thomas Willson and Isabella Dodds
- 4.18 Letter from John Burger to Thomas Willson, 1848
- 4.19 Monetary Agreement, 1841, between Thomas Willson and George A.Wright; includes Jacob Keefer, James Cummings.
- 4.20 Will, 1796; includes part of a will of J. Wilson denoting land division.

Sub-series B. Newsprint

- 4.20 Clipping, n.d., William Robert Cowan Obituary
- 4.21 *The Evening News* vol. 15, no. 40, Cleveland, Wednesday May 23, 1883, pp 1-8
- 4.22 *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto ON, Saturday, April 3, 1886, top of pp 7-11
- 4.23 *The Star Journal* Tuesday, March 2, 1909, pp 4-5
- 4.24 *The St. Catharines Standard*, Monday, April 21, 1941, pp 37-38
- 4.25 *The Thorold Post*, Thorold, Ontario, Friday, December 8, 1905, pp 1-8
- 4.26 Untitled Newsprint, ca. 1900 (?)
- 4.27 *Wives and Daughters* vol. II, no. 11, London Canada, August 1892

Series V. Military Ephemera, 1909, 1917-1918, 1943-1945, n.d.

- 2.6 Military Publications, 1909, 1944-1945, n.d.; includes Installation, Back to Civil Life (2nd and 3rd editions), Veterans Land Act, Uniforms and Distinctive Badges, napkin, box lid [5 books]
- 2.7 Photographs of Soldiers, 1917-1918; includes postcards [26 photographs]
- 2.8 World War I/II materials, 1918, 1943, 1945; includes letters, victory loan certificate, clipping, booklet Canada's Navy [1 photograph – Mary-Jane (Dolly) Cowan]

Series VI. Personal Ephemera, 1894-1978, n.d. (non-inclusive)

- 2.9 Booklets, 1901, 1925, n.d.; includes Only a Doll, Guide to the Pan-Am Exposition in Buffalo, Canadian National Exhibition advertising ephemera, the 10 commandments magazine clipping.
- 2.10 Books, ca. 1850, 1953; includes The Casket of Emily and Clara's Trip to Niagara Falls, The Story of Little Black Sambo.
- 2.11 Ephemera, 1890, 1894, 1900-1902, 1905, 1911, 1924, 1978; includes business cards/advertisements, train ticket, greeting cards, tickets, programs, pocket calendar (from the Pan-Am Expo.), A Selection of Some of Thorold's Historic Buildings (1978), T. Cowan's key ring, Thorold ON, 2 keys.
- 2.12 Religious Ephemera, 1898, 1906-1907, 1921-1923, 1929-1930, 1933-1934; includes The Presbyterian Record, hymns, programs.
- 2.13-2.14 School Materials, 1894, 1899, 1901-1902, n.d.; includes notebooks, 1 writing tablet [10 notebooks].
- 2.15 Willson Papers, 1861, 1884, 1908, 1934; includes marriage certificates, U.E.L. documents, school exam certificate.

Series VII. Photographs, ca.1850s, 1868, 1911, 1929, n.d.**Sub-series A. Framed Photographs, ca. 1850s,
[14 photographs]**

- 2.16 i) Middle aged woman (Margaret Muir?). Approximately 42 years old. Tin type? Ca. 1850s? Circular photograph on brass matting with a brass decorative border. Some discolouration along photo border in wooden case. 8.5mm x 9.5mm

ii) Young boy, Thomas Jr. Approximate age 9-12 years old. Ambrotype? Ca. 1850s? Rose coloured cheeks. Circular photograph on elaborate brass matting with decorative brass border in wooden case. Some discolouration around photograph border. 8.5mm x 9.5mm (red sticker on front of case)

iii) Young girl, Martha. Approximate age 6-9 years old. Ambrotype? Ca. 1850s? Brass matting with brass border. Wooden case. Photograph very faded. 8.5mm x 9.5mm (yellow sticker with "x" on front of case)

iv) Two young girls, Margaret's children: Abigail and Anamanda. Approximate ages 3 and 5 years old. Ambrotype? Ca. 1850s? Slightly rose coloured cheeks. Picture is beginning to fade. Elaborate brass matting with brass border in a wooden case. Discolouration in bottom left corner. 9.5mm x 85mm (red sticker with "x" on front).

v) Thomas Willson. Ambrotype? Ca. 1850s? Approximate age 60 years old. Rose coloured cheeks. In wooden case with brass border inside. 8.5mm x 9.5mm

vi) Young Girl, Olive. Ambrotype? Ca. 1850s? Approximate age 13-15 years old. Rose coloured cheeks. Photograph on elaborate brass border. In wooden case. Photograph beginning to fade. 9.5mm x 8.5mm (yellow sticker on front of case).

vii) Young girl, Mary. Ambrotype? Ca. 1850s? Approximate age 9-12 years old. Rose coloured cheeks. Elaborate brass matting with decorative brass border in wooden case. 8.5mm x 9.5mm (blue sticker on front of case).

viii) Young boy, Alanson. Ambrotype? Ca. 1850s? Approximate age 9-12 years old. Beginning to fade. Elaborate brass matting with brass border. Wooden case. 8.5mm x 9.5mm. (Green sticker on front of case)

ix) Woman. Daguerrotype? Ca. 1840s? Approximate age 30-40 years old. Very faded oval photograph. Elaborate brass matting with brass border. Wooden case. 6.5mm x 7.5mm

x) Young girl. Approximate age 5-8 years old. Ambrotype? Ca. 1850s? Rose coloured cheeks, green blouse, green/rose coloured table cloth. Brass matting with brass border in wooden case. 6.5mm x 7.5mm

xi) a. Joseph Willson (son of John Wilson and Jane Adams, and grandson of Irish John Willson U.E.L.) from a miniature painted by Levi Stevens, July 1826 b. frame for picture

xii) a. Robert Mathias Willson, M.D. Mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake 1861, died 1875. Son of John Willson U.E. and Mary Lee, and grandson of Irish John Willson U.E.L b. frame for picture

xiii) a. Unidentified photograph. Backing (from frame) reads "Leo P. French, Humberstone, Ontario. Bibles – religious books – mottos – pictures – tracts – Church and Sunday school supplies b. frame for unidentified photograph.

xiv) a. Thomas Willson picture (#16) b. Frame for Thomas Willson

**Sub-series B. Loose Photographs, 1911, 1929 n.d.,
[7 photographs]**

- 2.17 Ground Breaking Ceremony, ca. 1929 [6 photographs]
- 2.18 Photographs (lose), 1911, n.d. [7 photographs]; includes 'Grandpa and Edith', 'Nana's parents (Edith Willson) 50th Anniversary', 'Ian plowing on the ranch', 'saw mill and grist mill standing where the old tannery used to be (F. Wilson)', 'birthday card', 'unidentified'.
- 2.19 Photographs (MacLean), ca. 1800s, n.d.; includes Archibald Bruce MacLean, Emma Alice Brown MacLean, Mr. and Mrs. Archibald MacLean and family, Mrs. Sheila Jean MacLean [3 scans, 1 re-print]

**Sub-series C. Sleeved Photographs, ca. 1868, n.d.
[20 photographs]**

- 2.20 i) Tin Types includes; Francis Bond-Head Willson, ca. 1868, Step-brothers: John Robert, Alanson; Step-sisters: Olive, Mary or Martha; wife of Francis Willson, Florence Upper "cartouche" sleeve; unidentified photographs
- ii) Carte de Visite (Generation IV) includes; presumed 6 sons of Thomas Willson (#16) including Francis Bond Head Willson age 28?, unidentified photographs.

Series VIII. Realia, ca. 1900, 1929, n.d.

- 3.1 Coins, 1812 (?), 1834, 1847, 1852, 1857, 1862, 1865, 1874, 1893, 1905, 1914, 1916, 1918, 1949, n.d. [35 coins]
- 3.2 Masonic pin, 1929; Port Colborne Chapter, no. 133 – O.E.S. (Order of the Eastern Star), inscribed on back: Harry Cowan 1929
- 3.3 Doll, ca. 1900; dressed in late 1800s, early 1900s clothing. China hands and face on stand. Fully clothed including petticoat and stockings.

- 3.4 Trowel, 1929; presented to Mr. A.B. MacLean, chairman of the Welland Board of Education, on the occasion of his laying of the corner stone of the Welland Vocational School, October 23, 1929

Subject Access: 600 Willson, John, d. 1798.
610 Maclean Family.
610 Willson Family.
650 United Empire loyalists -- Ontario -- Stamford (Township).
651 Stamford (Ont. : Township) -- History -- Sources.
651 Stamford (Ont. : Township) -- Genealogy.
651 Thorold (Ont. : Township) -- History -- Sources.
651 Thorold (Ont. : Township) -- Genealogy.
700 Willson, Francis Bond Head.
